

Mission:

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.

**Rick Scott**

Governor

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State Surgeon General & Secretary

Vision: To be the Healthiest State in the Nation**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Smokeless Tobacco: Not a Safe Alternative to Cigarette Smoking

The Gulf County Tobacco Prevention Program Raises Awareness About Smokeless Tobacco During Through With Chew Week

Gulf County, Fla. – The Gulf County Tobacco Prevention Program and Tobacco Free Florida is encouraging Floridians to learn the facts about the harmful effects of using smokeless tobacco and to make a plan to stop using these products. To help raise awareness, The Gulf County Tobacco Prevention Program is observing Through With Chew Week from February 16-22.

Gulf County S.W.A.T. (Student Working Against Tobacco) members have created educational commercials that depict the harmful effects of Chew. The commercials will be shown throughout the county on local news stations.

Compared to the decrease in youth cigarette use, there has not been a significant change in the use of smokeless tobacco products among youth in the state. In 2012, 32 percent of Gulf County high school students reported current use of smokeless tobacco products although 5.6 percent of Florida high school students reported current use of smokeless tobacco products¹ as compared to 5.1 percent a decade ago.²

Smokeless tobacco includes products such as chew, spit, dip, snuff and snus. These products are commonly used by placing the product between the teeth and gum. The chemicals in smokeless tobacco are then absorbed into the bloodstream through the skin.

“Candy and fruit flavors mask the bad taste of tobacco, making it easier for kids to start using smokeless tobacco products,” said Jessie Pippin, Tobacco Prevention Specialist. “Even though some believe otherwise, smokeless tobacco should not be used as an alternative to smoking and it’s not a ‘trend’ to be encouraged.”

There are many dangers associated with the use of smokeless tobacco. Some of the harmful effects include:

- Cancers of the mouth, tongue, cheek, throat, esophagus, stomach, pancreas, pharynx and larynx
- Increased risk of heart attack and stroke
- Leukoplakia (oral lesions on the cheeks gums, and/or tongue)

Users of smokeless tobacco have an 80 percent higher risk of oral cancer and a 60 percent higher risk of esophageal cancer and of pancreatic cancer compared to non-users.³ The use of smokeless tobacco also causes gum disease (gingivitis), which can lead to bone and tooth loss.⁴ Studies show adolescent boys who use smokeless tobacco have a higher risk of becoming cigarette smokers.⁵

Like cigarettes, smokeless tobacco products contain nicotine, a highly addictive and dangerous chemical. Adolescents’ bodies are more sensitive to nicotine, and adolescents are more easily addicted than adults.⁶ Furthermore, most tobacco users start by the age of 18.⁷ These young people rarely consider the long-term health consequences associated with tobacco use when they start and many continue using tobacco well into adulthood, often with serious and even deadly consequences.⁸

The Gulf County Tobacco Prevention Program works to educate and inform citizens that smokeless tobacco products are not effective ways to quit smoking. Currently, there is no scientific or medical evidence that can prove the use of smokeless tobacco is an effective way for a person to quit smoking.

Florida Department of Health

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Floridians who want to quit any form of tobacco have access to the state's free and proven-effective resources, which include free FDA-approved nicotine replacement therapy (NRT), like the patch and gum, when medically appropriate. This combined approach of counseling and NRT may double or triple a tobacco user's chance of quitting.⁹ Tobacco Free Florida's 3 Free & Easy Ways to Quit include:

- **CALL:** Call the Florida Quitline at 1-877-U-CAN-NOW to speak with a Quit Coach who will help assess a user's addiction and help create a personalized quit plan.
- **CLICK:** Enroll in the Web Coach®, which will help to create a web-based quit plan unique to each individual user, visit <https://www.quitnow.net/florida>.
- **COME IN:** Sign up for Quit Smoking Now group classes at your local Area Health Education Center (AHEC) by calling James Lewis (850) 718-7935.

Take the initiative this February; make the choice to be Through With Chew. For more information on smokeless tobacco, visit www.tobaccofreeflorida.com/smokelesstobacco.

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ABOUT TOBACCO FREE FLORIDA

DOH's Tobacco Free Florida campaign is a statewide cessation and prevention campaign funded by Florida's tobacco settlement fund.

Tobacco users interested in quitting are encouraged to use one of the state's three ways to quit. To learn about Tobacco Free Florida and the state's free quit resources, visit www.tobaccofreeflorida.com or follow the campaign on Facebook at www.facebook.com/TobaccoFreeFlorida or Twitter at www.twitter.com/tobaccofreefla.

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¹ Florida Youth Tobacco Survey (FYTS), Florida Department of Health, Bureau of Epidemiology, 2012

² Florida Youth Tobacco Survey (FYTS), Florida Department of Health, Bureau of Epidemiology, 2003

³ Boffetta, P, et al., "Smokeless tobacco and cancer," The Lancet 9:667-675, 2008.

⁴ Tomar, SL, "Chewing Tobacco Use and Dental Caries Among U.S. Men," Journal of the American Dental Association, 1999, 130: 160

⁵ Tomar, S, "Is use of smokeless tobacco a risk factor for cigarette smoking? The U.S. experience," Nicotine & Tobacco Research 5(4):561-569, August 2003.

⁶ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke: A Report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Coordinating Center for Health Promotion, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2006

⁷ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Preventing Tobacco Use Among Youth and Young Adults: A Report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2012.

⁸ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Preventing Tobacco Use Among Youth and Young Adults: A Report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2012.